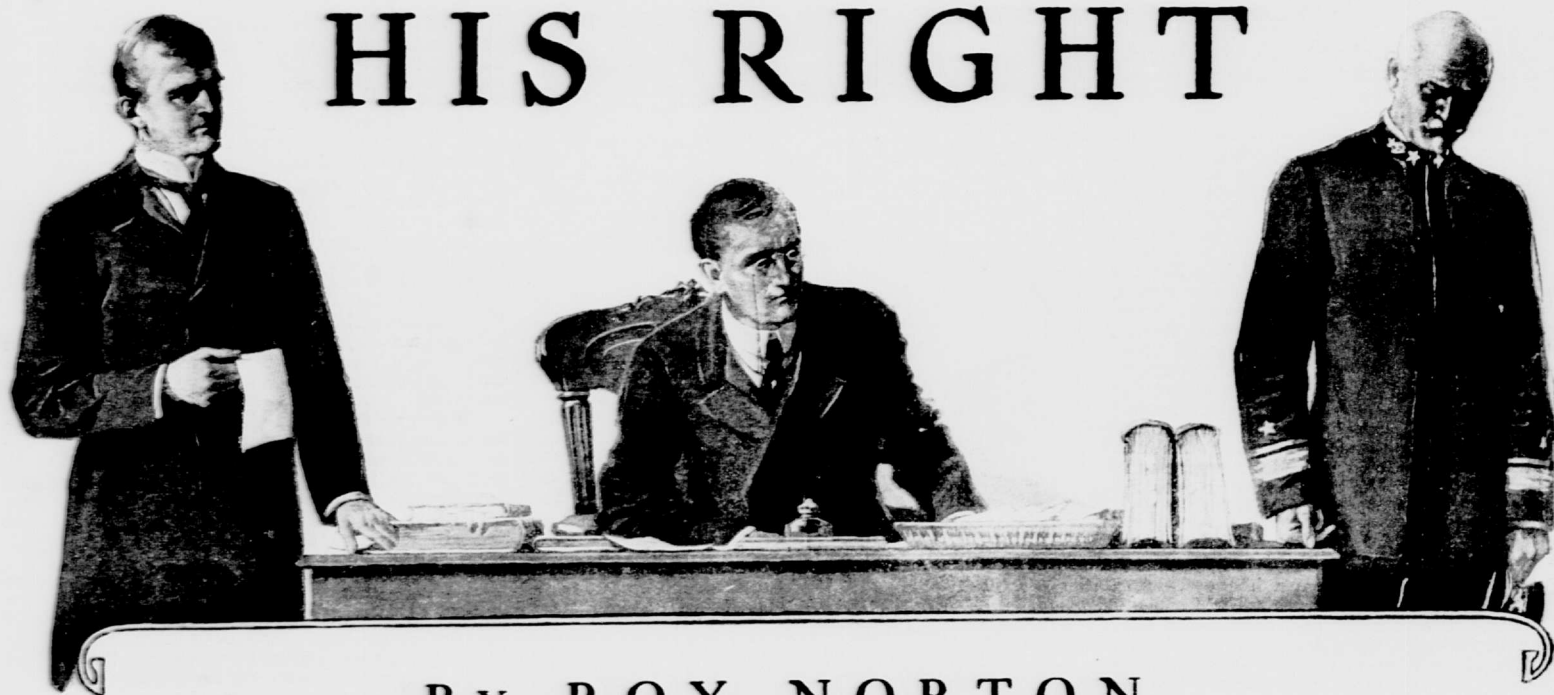


HIS RIGHT



BY ROY NORTON

Author of "The Vanishing Fleets"

Drawings by George Gibbs

HE rose from his seat with a slow, steady, half furtive movement, went to the door and locked it softly as if ashamed of his act, and then returned to his desk, on which lay an official document staring at him like an insolent visitor. His candid eyes had not perused it in detail; for he knew its significance, and it was like a death blow to pride. He sat down, stiffly erect, and then appeared to droop slowly over until his wrinkled forehead found rest on his hand and elbow, and even the white mustache, closely cropped above his cleanly shaven chin, seemed to partake of his dejection.

It was there before him, the promotion of which he had dreamed in his midship days, which entitled him to fly his own flag as Rear Admiral; but it had come too late. Somehow, even though he had pictured its receipt, it was the tangible call of time striking the bell on ambition and the end of his watch,—the official decree of condemnation relegating him to the ranks of the aged, like a ship thrown out and sent to final moorings preliminary to its breaking up. He had not felt his age,—why, he was a young man now! He sat up sharply, stretched out his arm, and fingered his well preserved muscle to assure himself that he was still in good physical condition. Why, he could show the youngsters something, even though he was to be thrown among the discards of the retired list! But the document said in effect that he was too old to be of any further use, tossed him the bauble of promotion, and in the same terse phrasing ordered him to report at Annapolis, where more than forty years before he had studied his profession.

AH! that was it! Forty years ago! It hadn't seemed so long. It was more like last season that he had gone jubilantly forth into a world of thunderous guns, of sanguinary warfare and decisive action, to become a sailor in truth. How he and the "other boys" had worshiped the grim old Admiral who was now but a memory, whose bronze figure stood lifelike and still in the park of the great clangorous city, hidden over there in the haze of the morning! Even he had been retired; but it was by God and not by the young men of the department. Now he realized that he had always dreaded this minute. He even recalled the fierce utterances of glorious youth when in the hot argument of the ward room he had declared that if Heaven was kind he would die swiftly in the splendid excitement of battle, with leaping, exultant blood pumping through his veins, and nothing but the smoke of the guns obscuring the joyous sunshine. Oh! they were good and valorous dreams to have come to naught and leave him only this: an old, old, man, a Rear Admiral of the fare-you-well kind, to be mustered out without ever having seen the blue pennant—his pennant—fluttering above a ship! Empty honors—and the scrap heap!

He opened a drawer in his desk devoted to the security of his most personal things, slipped the unwelcome paper into its depths, and closed it, trying by the act to shut its unpleasant import from mind; but a calendar perched above his inkwell glared at him maliciously with a sinister white eye and re-

called the passing of time. It thrust black figures at him, one by one, to show him that in six weeks—only six weeks—he would be gone from its knowledge, to return no more than the days it symbolized.

He jerked his fatigue coat down with annoyance and walked steadily out into the little world of industry, where he was still master; but for the first time looked on it with reproachful eyes, sensing that already those dumb, inanimate structures, the half completed hulls, and the men who wrought among them, no longer regarded him as the foremost actor on the stage of which they were the setting. With something of defiance in his alert stride, he wandered here and there still immersed in introspection.

GOOD morning, sir," a voice called, and he pulled himself together to answer the salutation of an officer who seemed ridiculously boyish and young.

"Good morning, Mr. Hardy," he responded gravely, and then halted before a trim steam cutter that shone resplendent in its first smooth coat of paint.

"Nice lines, sir, hasn't she?" the boy went on with enthusiasm. "That's the first one of the new model, sir. Ought to stand up well. Fine freeboard. Make good sea boats. Why, I could almost dare to cross the Atlantic in that, sir!"

It was the voice of youthful pride praising its own work, and thereby casting reflections on older ways. The Rear Admiral harbored a vague sense of injury for an instant; but it was dissipated by a look from the young eyes that seemed asking his approval. He hastened to gratify the appeal.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it is a beautiful model." He walked round the little craft, and almost lovingly laid a hand on the trim quick-firer planted belligerently in the bow. His glance traveled back over the boyish figure, so erect and supple in its new uniform. No one could resist that smiling face on which flamed the triumph of first work.

"I almost wish," the Rear Admiral said, "that she was a first class battleship we were to launch."

He emphasized the "we," and the boy blushed with pleasure. But the rush of color was unnoticed, because a whimsical turn of fancy had flashed through the veteran's mind. He laughed aloud. Why not? His days were about over. Was he not master for six weeks? He entered into such a state of abstraction that the junior left him alone.

AND therein were the beginnings of the singular actions of the Rear Admiral that for a time threatened his downfall; but into which he entered with a reckless, insouciant enthusiasm more befitting the youth he had left behind.

The congratulations of his subordinates received within the next few days fell on deaf ears. He was too busy with the great project that was to terminate his activities. He was light hearted. He was gay. He dropped all unnecessary dignity. He overlooked breaches of etiquette that in former years would have unleashed the trenchant sarcasms of his tongue.

"The old man is getting young again," the juniors said with sly waggings of their heads. "He's glad to leave the service," older ones suggested. But one

and all their admiration warmed for this grim old man of many seas who was going out loaded with honor. Long before this they had fathomed the kindly heart and learned that crusty words oftentimes concealed abashed sentiment.

The first act of his enterprise was the issuance of a bulletin announcing a christening; and it caused much merriment among the officers of the staff, for it was the first time a mere steam cutter had been so honored. He named as sponsor a tiny girl with whom he had become acquainted in a park through which he daily trudged for exercise,—an acquaintance that had developed an exquisite intimacy, for she was almost his first sweetheart. All his life until she came he had found time for nothing but the sea and "the service." The sturdy old man, who had fought with Farragut unafraid, became timorous when he asked her parents' consent for her presence, and when it was gained departed with singular elation. Elation and regret! Why, if he had not followed the flag so exclusively he might have had a daughter like that, and— He choked up and gave a loud snort and "Ahem!" to stifle emotions of which he was ashamed. He detested weakness, he said to himself, and sentiment was only one of its manifestations.

It wasn't much of a christening; but he celebrated his first and only launching in ceremonious form. He paid for the magnum—an expensive one too—from his own pocket. It was more than her small hands could lift, and he had to assist her in its demolition. Together they clutched the string, swung it against the bowstem, and watched the sparkling smother of their libation, while she excitedly jumped up and down and almost forgot her speech.

"I name thee the Loggerhead!" she cried aloud in her joyous treble, and the grave officers behind her smiled in spite of the seriousness of the occasion. Only the Rear Admiral saw in it nothing ludicrous.

IT was nothing but their fierce loyalty to this survivor of two wars that restrained their smiles when, a few days later, he made the dramatic departure that was to cause much perturbation in the mysterious department in Washington where Precedent was the shibboleth.

The Loggerhead hugged the dock one fine morning in that resplendent summer, with much dunnage aboard and her gun staring saucily at the miniature waves of the bay. She had an air of enormous dignity; for she was to assume rank with battleships of the line,—was to be a sister to the Dreadnoughts of the world; was to enter the nation's log garbed in the grandeur of a flagship. And she was to have a full crew.

Six men stood at salute when the Rear Admiral appeared on the dock and his flag went whipping up the little staff, a fit companion for the nation's banner which flung rippling folds of stately stars into the fingers of the wind. Thirteen guns boomed out in greeting and farewell. The officers of the yard stood at attention when he bade them good by. He did it gruffly, because he knew they understood his one vanity, knew they loved him and hated to see him go. He wanted none of their pity. He had come to the end of his tether without asking it from any

man, and would go out without accepting its voluntary tender.

"All ready Mr. Hardy," he said to the boyish Lieutenant, with the brevity of one who had commanded mighty fighters of the sea.

The junior saluted and gave an order. The engineer turned on the steam, and the quartermaster at the rudder took a course that had been laid down with as much exactitude as would have been bestowed upon a cruiser. They were off with the blue pennant at the staff opened wide to let passing ferries know that a Rear Admiral was aboard and this was his flagship.

Out through Kill von Kull and into Newark Bay they tore through the dancing crests, which seemed to welcome the sailor home again, and then through Staten Island Sound, where great steamers narrowly missed them and men stared curiously at their pennant. Now they nosed along Arthur Kill and into the Raritan River, heedless of the glasses leveled at them by outlying craft, and entered the waters of the nearly deserted Raritan Canal. There the Loggerhead passed between shady ranks of trees standing mute guard over the narrow thread she was to traverse.

THE magic sparkle of the sea was left behind and replaced by the cathedral like stillness of this long, dreamy avenue, above which a strip of clear, stainless sky shone in far away splendor. The journey had been made thus far with no more than desultory talk, which now, in the afternoon laziness, subsided into silence. Only the cough of the exhaust and the flapping of the flags awoke echoes. The Rear Admiral lounged back in the big wicker chair which had been placed for his benefit, and was less erect.

He felt drowsy, and fought against his weakness. Why, it was a shame for so young a man as he felt himself to be to snooze like a doddering old chap in a chimney corner! He wouldn't do it! No sir, not he! He watched the flag—his flag—with loving eyes, until it appeared to grow in size, and quite insidiously the throb of the little screw became the tremor of a huge ship in the open sea. The horizon widened until land was nowhere in sight and nothing could be seen in the offing save the far lying smoke of others of the fleet which were now surely following the flagship in a splendid cruise of magnificent distances. There they were, unmistakably, battleships, cruisers, and destroyers, the pride of the service, the glorious emblems of a glorious nation's might. He sagged from his usual upright pose, and his square chin was pillowed on his breast.

The pennant still whipped, and the shadows lengthened; but the Rear Admiral had succumbed to habit and fallen fast asleep.

THE curtain of the dusk was lowering and the polished waters of the canal caught up and threw back red lacework gleams cast by the sunset through the bordering trees when the flagship Loggerhead hove to for the night. With rigid punctiliousness the junior Lieutenant appointed his watches and dutifully followed the Rear Admiral to the weather beaten tavern where they were to rest, while behind them came a sailor who lugged the officers' suit cases. There was a relaxation of form in the inn. The white headed old man was lonely. He called for the waiter that had taken his order in such a sharp tone that the man involuntarily brought his heels together and assumed an air of deference.

"My compliments to Lieutenant Hardy," the guest said, his voice in the deserted hollows of the dining room sounding with a roar, "and say that the Admiral requests the pleasure of his company at dinner."

The waiter's eyes and mouth seemed synchronized in an effort to open to their widest; but he delivered the message. The officers dined together without reference to their cruise. The Rear Admiral's thoughts were going back to the little golden haired girl in the park. If it had not been for the voyage, he would have seen her hours before this; would have watched her come skipping away from her playmates with that half-slipping hippityhop to beam up at him and thrust her slender white hand into his. He wondered if she too was to go out of his life in this chaos where everything of habit and training and environment was retreating stealthily and leaving him alone, cast off and marooned among civilians. He was still thinking of her when he bade his guest good night.

"I wish," he said on the following day,—"somehow I wish we had brought a ship's bell. I feel sort of lost without the bells." His voice sounded plaintive.

"Yes, sir," the junior dutifully assented, sharing in the belief that it would add to the dignity of the flagship of which he was chief executive officer. After all, he had that honor, and his brawny young chest unconsciously swelled a trifle. It was a great command for one of his years. And then as its significance dawned on him he covered his mouth to hide the grin at the thought of what "the boys" of his class would say when they heard of it.

The junior kept a log of the cruise, according to

the rules and regulations. It was eventful. It contained such entries as this:

11.44.—Sighted a canal boat on the starboard bow; under slow sail. Name not apparent; but when spoken showed the number 1578. Master's name not quite audible, but sounded like Watt T. Ell.

Or again.

12.52.—Came up with power launch Marietta bound for Newark, flying owner's flag. Owner reports trouble with lock tender farther up, and asks Government intervention because the tender impudently volunteered to pedicure his face.

The junior decided later that his entries were facetious, and expunged some of his comments.

After New Brunswick, Princeton, and Trenton had been dropped behind they had a stormy interview with this same belligerent lock tender. He opened the water into his cell like aperture so viciously that the Loggerhead was almost psized in the swirls that hoisted her up like a bobbing cork and sent her reeling into the spume until her gun deck

was awash. The Rear Admiral delayed for a few minutes after they had gained the upper level to express his opinion. It has been confirmed that the lock tender, despite a long life of contact with canal men, was much impressed; that there have been no further complaints; and that he still deports himself with the subdued air of one who has been petrified with awe. He has also learned to distinguish between flags.

Intrepid navigators in half abandoned canals find the greatest and most insidious enemy in the weeds, and they audaciously shackled the propeller of the Loggerhead at frequent intervals, requiring halts to be made while a man dived overboard and tore loose the mop of verdure; but the Rear Admiral bore these annoyances with uniform patience.

INDEED, the only mishap in that strange voyage was in a plane. The cumbersome cradles were coated with slime, and crawled over the hills with rheumatic groans and clanking chains like materialized ghosts of forgotten traffic. They were never intended for small craft or with a view of transferring flagships, and while a huge canal boat fitted them snugly and rested upright, the Loggerhead was almost lost in their ribs. The Rear Admiral on this occasion was seated in his chair, while the crew clung to the wet stanchions on the side endeavoring to hold the cutter on an even keel; but the slime was their undoing. The Loggerhead's keel slipped abruptly from the chocks; she fell on her side, and the officer was sent sprawling out on a muddy beam, to the detriment of his uniform. The revised log was not devoted to personal remarks; so what he said is lost to history. It was without doubt a vigorous dissertation; but the flag—his flag—was still uninjured and fluttered as gaily, while the plane halted and the boat was righted, as it had when dung to a more propitious breeze.

Bordentown was lost in the wake, and the Delaware River bore them to where they entered the Delaware & Chesapeake Canal to pass to Elk River, down which they steamed to the gaunt receiving arm of Chesapeake Bay. Annapolis and the end of the trip seemed very near; but this, after all, was more like the broad, open ocean. It was more inspiring than a canal.

The Rear Admiral sniffed at the salt water and drew deep inhalations. He forgot the afternoon naps and recovered years of youth; but felt always an indefinable melancholy. He pulled himself together and held himself more severely erect. His

calm gray eyes beneath his heavy gray eyebrows shone brighter, and closely scanned the shoreline along which they bore. He was scrutinizing it to see whether it too had grown older; but it showed no sign of retirement. It would be there to watch languidly whole generations of other sailors pass in review long after he and all who knew him were dead. It was immutable and supercilious! Well, it didn't matter, anyway; it was his last cruise.

THEY were waiting for the Loggerhead when she blew her thin, shrill whistle off Annapolis, impudently assuming the dignity of a battleship.

The sun was shining,—the early morning sun, which flirted with the waves and sent them into spasms of leaping exultation. It intensified the blue of the uniforms on the landing. The Commandant was there in person to receive the Rear Admiral, and appeared anxious when he studied his old friend's face. They walked away arm in arm, while the junior Lieutenant looked haughtily at the cadets of whom he had so recently been a member. They charmed him; but he preserved a stony and austere silence.

The Commandant refrained from comment, but with his own hand gave the Rear Admiral an official envelop. It contained a peremptory order to report forthwith to the office of the Secretary of the Navy in Washington. The Rear Admiral read it and brushed his hand across his forehead. His fingers trembled a little. Such a summons was ominous; but duty was duty, and all his life he had bravely obeyed without hesitation.

He lost no time in issuing orders to the Loggerhead, and hastened to comply. On the short journey he reviewed his cruise and had a sense of abashment at his past temerity; but doggedly set his teeth, resolved to answer any pertinent question that might be asked. Was he not a Rear Admiral and within his rights and entitled to some leeway?

HE trudged steadily into the huge building, where the men holding high administrative offices, the various minor bureaus, and their army of clerks held working abode, and announced himself. For the first time in many years he was compelled to wait for a few minutes outside the forbidding doors.

Behind them the Secretary of the Navy and the first assistant and the second assistant and the first assistant clerk and the first assistant stenographer were assisting each other in a conference. Before them was a pile of newspapers containing a good story. The topmost carried a conspicuous heading which read: "Rear Admiral Stone's Cruise. Mighty Flagship Loggerhead Last Heard from in the Bay. Has Safely Escaped the Dangers of the D & W Canal. Doughty Officer's Flag Sighted Passing Markton Light."

The chiefs had many theories, some of which embodied insanity. They cringed beneath the storm of ridicule that had burst over them; but this culprit was too much beloved by his countrymen to be dealt with like a mischievous midshipman. They must go slowly, hear his explanation, and then permit him to retire immediately and drop from public sight and memory. The cruise of the Loggerhead must be expunged. The Secretary, polished, forceful, and well groomed, who had recently been called from his law practice in one of the great cities to direct the naval affairs of the nation, was decisive on this point. All withdrew save him, and it was he who greeted the Rear Admiral when the usher opened the door.

THE Secretary's frigid air thawed imperceptibly when he looked at the sturdy old figure and met the perturbed gray eyes. Here was a hero after all; but he had done something that he alone could explain. Perhaps there was some explanation. He hoped so; but doubted it. He wished he knew sailors' lives and sailors' motives more intimately. They were of a different world than he had studied. In this episode was the ridiculous; but none of it attached to the man before him. He was perplexed.

"Admiral," he said after the customary greetings were exchanged, "what about this cruise of yours?"

"Well, sir, we came through the canals in a cutter."

"And flew your flag?"

"Yes, sir."

That was all. The officer had no excuse to offer, apparently. He sat quietly before the Secretary, with an underglow of smoldering defiance in his eyes. The Secretary mistook his attitude for stubbornness, and his wrath flamed again when he thought of the newspaper stories. His voice became hard and cold and sarcastic. He bit his words off incisively.

"Yes, and you had a fool christening up there in the yards, called your cutter the Loggerhead, went out demanding full honors to your flag, and—"

"Stop, sir!"

The fighting man who had been in peaceful paths for years was aroused. His interruption was a command that recalled the valiant clash of steel, the terrific boom of heavy guns, and the wild savagery of battle. It was the ringing, vibrant voice that had been heard above slippery decks when it cheered men on and drove them into the teeth of Death. He was on his feet now, a martial figure of majestic force and dignity, only his face was drawn and white and his eyes flamed with a livid fury of indignation.

"Stop, sir!" he thundered. "It is my flag. I've earned it. By Heaven! I have! It's almost as dear to me as the one for which I fought before you were born. Did you think you could shelve me on the retired list after more than forty years of service, without giving me a chance to see the flag I've dreamed of having all my life, and worked for all my life, afloat at a masthead?"

The Secretary gasped and lost the arrogance of position and the white heat of temper. He stood silent and nonplussed before this quivering old gladiator of the seas. The hand that he had involuntarily raised when he sprang to his feet to confront the Rear Admiral dropped slowly to his

Continued on page 18



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Old Time Darky Humor
Continued from page 8

of it! For an instant his face wore a puzzled look, which quickly change into one of liveliest satisfaction as he strutted back and forth puffing grandly away at his windfall. Nor was he the only darky present that was willing to smoke half consumed cigars; for shortly a half-dozen large mouths furnished with splendid ivory cigar traps and baited with a laugh were ranged along the side of the smoking car, to catch any stray tobacco birds that might fly out of the windows.

Couldn't Faze This One
A natures philosophy of the careless, good seen in the little doggerel verse laughingly sung by a black farmer, when, at the end of a bad crop year, nothing was coming to him after his supply bills were paid. He could neither read nor write, he had no money nor chance of getting any for another twelvemonth; yet apparently there was no fretting on his part. He took the balance sheet, which was an utter mystery to him, and pretending to inspect it, following the rows of figures with eye and finger, he gleefully chanted:

"Aught's an aught,
Figger's a figger.
Ev'ryting fur de white man,
An' nuffin' ter de nigger!"

Then carelessly he stuffed the bit of paper into his pocket, "cut the pigeon's wing," and finally walked away, to all appearances with a whimsical enjoyment of the fact that his own penniless condition corroborated the statement of his song.

They Love Music
The negro's love of music is as innate as his love of fun. Pathos and humor are so closely akin that it is not surprising to find in even the most rollicking negro song those minor cadences that suggest the pathetic. But the humorous largely predominates, and it must be borne in mind that such touching melodies as "Old Black Joe," "Swanee River," "My Old Kentucky Home," and the like are only the idealizations of white composers, and not the work of the negro himself.

To a greater degree, possibly, than any other race or nationality the negro feels the impulse of music. Many a dusky cook and housemaid sings over her work all the day through; and not seldom she improvises words about her work in a most amusing way. Thus, in Southern households it is not uncommon for the cook to be singing in the kitchen something like this:

"Now I'll put de tea kittle on—tea kittle on.
Now I'll put de tea kittle on.
It's time to make de tea."—
accompanying her actions to the words. Then the refrain will change to something like this:
"Now I'll take de biscuits out—biscuits out.
Now I'll take de biscuits out
And put 'em on a plate."—
while again her movements will follow both the words and rhythm of her song.

At the same time, in the dining room, the maid will be setting the table to music, usually the same air as that sung by her sister the cook:
"Now I put de plates around—plates around.
Now I put de knives and forks—knives and forks.
Now I put de napkins on—napkins on."—
varying the words to suit her immediate occupation. Sometimes a hurry call will quicken both the song and the motions, and something like this is the result:

"Now I've got to hurry up—hurry up.
Now I've got to hurry up.
Miss Sallie's callin' me."—
and there is double quick to words and actions.

All the while, out in the garden and in the stables, the gardener and the driver are making the welkin ring with their own sonorous melodies.

About the last place in the world in which anyone would expect either music or fun making is among a band of convicts; yet the negro chain gangs that are compelled to work on the streets and roads in the South ordinarily keep time with pick and shovel to music of their own making, and rarely indeed is such music sad. It is sometimes even merry; and at others has such a mock plaintive allusion to "this ball and chain," that if the bystander does not laugh, it is because he is so filled with pity that he has no room in his heart for merriment.

The Power of Song
ON one occasion this instinct of the negro to keep time to music served the writer a good turn. A quantity of chemical salts that had become damaged required to be broken up into a granulated condition and remixed with fresh salts, in order to be marketable. The scene was a large warehouse, and the implements were shovels and screens. About twenty darkies were set to work, some pounding up the damaged goods, others mixing the old and the new, while still others were shoveling the mixture through the screens. The weather was very warm, the chemicals were refractory, and the darkies soldiered along with their work, pounding and mixing and shoveling away to exasperatingly slow music. Even the bonus of a wagonload of luscious watermelons failed to arouse more than momentary enthusiasm.

Among the workmen there happened to be a tall, straight, magnificently developed young fellow, Brock by name, as strong and tough as a hickory sapling. After a long day's work this ebony Hercules was as fresh and spry as a young colt. I noticed that Brock swung his shovel in long, graceful sweeps in perfect time

to his music as leader of the song. To an employer, it was a pleasing sight to note the fullness of Brock's shovel and the bending of its handle, under the powerful impetus of the muscular arms and torso. Brock knew his business if ever shoveler did.

After the failure of twenty watermelons to enthrone my workmen, I hit on the scheme of bribing Brock. I offered to pay him fifty cents a day extra if he would sing fast time songs so as to get the boys to do faster work. A little praise of his splendid physique, together with the bribe, and an imagined picture of "dem lazy niggers doin' a good day's work fur once," so worked on Brock's sense of the fitness of things that a bargain was struck on the spot. To this day I stand firm in the faith that Brock's merry melodies got one-third more work out of those darkies than they had ever given me before, and that each extra half-dollar paid to him brought in return six or seven dollars' worth of extra work from his fellows.

Absurdities from the Pulpit
FROM the pulpit many a quaint and homely bit of absurdity has issued through African lips.

For instance, the following is credited to an earnest darky divine intent upon explaining to his simple hearers the intangible omnipresence of God. Said he, "My brederen, God is ev'rywhar. He is right here now. You can't see Him, you can't tech Him, you can't hear Him; but He is here. It's just dis way, brederen: Ef a skunk was under dis house, you wouldn't see him, you wouldn't hear him, you wouldn't tech him; but you'd know he was dar all the same. Jess so with God. He's right here, and we know He's here."

Another preacher in expounding most sonorously upon the grandeur and harmony of the starry heavens, referred to the "awful chicanery" of the Creator, by which all was kept in motion.

Another, at a revival meeting, declared that in the course of his long life he had seen very few black sheep; but that there were a "great many black niggers around," and that unless they'd get themselves "washed whiter than snow," if they ever got to Heaven at all their wings would not be white like doves, but would be "jes' like common, rusty, corn field crows."

Was It Up or Down
IT may be permitted to recall the now somewhat classic story of a rural colored debating society in Georgia. The barn of one of the society members had been destroyed by fire, whereupon a debate was arranged on the question, "Did Brother Smith's Barn Burn Up or Burn Down?"

After carefully weighing the arguments

side, and the other, which had been clenched above the edge of his desk across which they stared at each other, opened gradually until its tense, white fingers were spread wide apart. He was beginning vaguely, like one groping in semidarkness, to comprehend the motives that had sent this grim jawed veteran out on an absurd cruise through abandoned canals.

UNSEEN by either of them, another had interpreted the cause. Attracted by the intangible magnetism of presence, they turned together toward an open doorway leading into another office. On its threshold stood a quiet, well poised man with grave eyes of understanding—eyes that seemed of profound depth and accustomed to looking on men and affairs from a splendid judicial isolation. Quite abruptly the Rear Admiral's heels clicked together and his hand came to the salute. The tense form of the Secretary of the Navy relaxed suddenly and bent over in a deferential bow.

"Mr. President," the sailor almost stammered, "I—I—"

The President, with a calm, restraining gesture of his upraised hand, claimed the privilege of speech and took a step or two into the room. "Stone," he said very quietly and very kindly, "I understand. I see it all now. We have been annoyed like little children whose rules of play have been broken. You wanted to see your flag blowing out beside the one which you have followed, through thick and thin, through good times and hard times, before you were retired."

The Rear Admiral nodded, and looked down at the desk, at which the cabinet officer was also staring, but with a softer light in his eyes. "You wanted to see it aloft," the President continued; "wanted to see it above some craft where the wind could unfurl it and tell you, as I now tell you, that you had done well; that the service hadn't been without reward; and that the flag was worth fighting for—worth dying for if need be. Wasn't that it?" he concluded in a tone that had dropped almost to a whisper, as if the great and vital theme of patriotism was too sacred to be spoken of without reverential softness.

The Rear Admiral ceased studying the desk. "I did, sir," he said with a note of infinite pathos in his voice which he vainly tried to control. "I did, sir. Why, I've fought for the other, and for it because it seemed a part of the other, and—something to love when all else was gone; something to show that the game had been worth while and that my country knew it and appreciated that I'd done my best—my very best!"

He paused for what seemed a long time,

brought forward on each side of the momentous question, the impartial judges decided that—it did.

Their Own Dictionaries
NUMEROUS beyond all hope of even alluding to them in a brief article are the humorous features and types, the comic sayings and doings of the "Brother in Black." From the picturesque picanninies to the gray haired ancient who once saw Marse George Washington, the century has been filled with them. The dusky Hannibals, Caesars, Pompeys, and Scipios who were on the slave roll of almost every large plantation were enough to have frightened away the stoutest hearted invader, had their natures matched their names. In that distinguished roster too there was more than one Hector and Achilles, Demosthenes and Cicero, Socrates and Cato. Venus and Juno, Niobe and Lethe were revived in black contrast to the myths of old. There was a Seventy-seven and a Ninety-six in South Carolina, and in Mississippi a Little Bility who could never come to understand his own name,—and no more he should, since his mother or his mother's master had named him Incomprehensibility.

Also, there were the "society names" of ambitious belles,—such sweet names as Diphtheria, Oceanica, Caledonia, and Serpentina, ordinarily abbreviated into Dippy, Oshie, Calie, and Serpie. Many of those individuals with big names had big words which emptied out of small vocabularies with such a rush that Noah Webster must have been submerged had he lived in Dixie.

Poor Webster! What could he have done with the compliments paid by an old servant to her young master when she told him that his bride was "highlutin, restocratic, and supuffalous"? Or how would that aligner of words have defined this description of a knock-out blow in a fistic encounter? "I fitched him an encommum on de side of his haid"? Most certainly, the vanquished fighter was not damned with any thing faint, whatever "encommum" may mean. The oldtime darky asked no help from any maker of dictionaries; he made words and phrases as he needed them. As in the case of the old butler, who, finding "radiator" and "refrigerator" a very Seylla and Charybdis, took a safe middle course, and made "rigerator" answer for both. Or the valet nurse who pronounced his patient in a "pussipation of sweat."

It would be a work richly worth while to gather and preserve these delicious absurdities of African simplicity which like evanescent wild flowers have blossomed in the Southland. The type is becoming an antique which—alas!—cannot be preserved in private house or public museum. For it must be admitted that as time goes by, Cuffee of antebellum days is gradually passing away, and that the uncuffed Cuffee of later generations is losing that oldtime jolly enjoyment of a lowly lot.

His Right
Continued from page 4

trying to whip his voice into submission. About him was an incomprehensible air of dull suffering. Sounds from without, fitful and distinct, floated through the window in intermingled suggestiveness. The clatter of a horse's hoofs on the pavement popped like the barking explosions of a rapid fire gun. The sharp yelp of a whistle out on the river's breast recalled the sirens of men of war. The dull roar of a distant blast became the thunder of heavy cannon, and the vagrant breeze stealing through the open window carried the tang of wide, wind swept spaces above a beckoning sea.

"I see now, sir," he said very quietly and with profound regret, "that I am old, very old. I had forgotten that Youth and I were no longer messmates; that for me he died long, long ago. And perhaps it was an old man's vanity that made me wish to see my flag unfurled where I foolishly thought it belonged. I've been proud to be a sailor, sir, and I've loved the service and the sea."

His voice was again shaky and he went on desperately in self abnegation. "They have been all I had to love and be proud of; they've been the family of which I was a part and where I belonged. Better men than I have retired without ever seeing their pennant above a craft, and—well, I might have done the same."

The Rear Admiral forgot that the President was on his feet, forgot his years of training, and quite slowly, like one who has made the last relinquishment and is overcome by final weakness, crumpled into a chair, with hands hanging listlessly.

THE President reached over on the desk and picked up a paper. He glanced at the Secretary, and read a quick light of approval in his eyes. He tore the document into little shreds, and the pieces went fluttering from his fingers to the carpet, resembling a miniature storm of snow. He turned to the veteran, but without response. The Rear Admiral was looking far away into the past, finding the vision painted against a spot of blank wall where the sun had stretched a mellow canvas of light. He was unaware that an order for his instant retirement had been decisively canceled and lay in mere spots of litter at the President's feet.

"I would suggest," the President said, "that as a fitting close to a glorious and valiant career, Rear Admiral Stone be designated to command the naval review that takes place off Atlantic Highlands next month. Provided, of course," he added with a sly undercurrent of humor, "that the Admiral will honor us by again flying his flag before he bids us good-by."